

## Taxi Cab Problem No Harder to Solve Here Than in London

In Preparing New York's Prospective Ordinance the Experience of the Largest City of the World Should Be Valuable.

Taxicab companies of New York take in more money in proportion to the service than any city in the world.

The continual cry of "dead mileage" no greater than elsewhere as proved.

A comparison of rates and how they can be lowered.

By Sophie Irene Loeb.

Bryant Willard, Chairman of the Board of Aldermen, will, in a few days, call another public hearing on the taxicab situation, after which his committee will get together and review the facts for the final adjustment of the forthcoming ordinance.



When I pointed out the fact to Mr. Willard that this matter has been before the public for consideration with various committees for more than three years and that the present committee has been appointed since last February, he answered: "Yes, I am fully aware of it. We have been endeavoring to hear all sides of this question and to be fair with every side in considering the whole proposition. That, with the other various duties devolving on an Aldermanic committee, I think justifies the seemingly long time it has taken to make a recommendation on this matter."

"What we want to do is to present some recommendation that will as nearly as possible meet with the approval of all and not infringe on any one's rights. I am as anxious as any one to be in mind that in the last five years a commission has been appointed to study the taxicab problem in London. The various committees, owners of taxicabs, which have started within the last five years, have started work, with one or two notable exceptions, in almost complete ignorance of the cab trade. They have had everything to learn, and necessarily have, in the initial stages, made many costly mistakes. On the other hand, while the motor cab is double the cost of the old horse cab it has an earning capacity more than twice as great."

Observation. The present contention that so many companies have gone out of business, failed, &c., is no different from that experienced in London, as this committee reports plainly show. It is stated that the capital embarked in the London taxicab trade is \$15,000,000. "It is important not to lose sight of the fact that while there are three cab seasons in London there are intermediate periods of considerable slackness, during which time the number of cabs required and the engaged mileage travelled are both much lessened."

"For 1910, it would appear that taking a rough daily average of 5,000 cabs working, the number of engagements per day would be about 90,000, and the gross receipts about \$32,500 daily—the great majority of cabs plying within a limited area."

Thus the above, which is the verbatim report, shows that the conditions in London are not vastly different from those in New York. Further, there is the startling fact that the average gross receipts per day of London are \$32,500 counting on a service of 5,000 cabs—practically the same as that of New York with its 2,500 cabs. The public hearing here developed the fact that the average earning of each taxicab was \$14 per day and there being 2,500 cabs the gross receipts realized are about \$35,000.

Any layman may see from these figures that with an investment in London of \$15,000,000 and the gross receipts the same as New York and the companies operating at a profit, the cabs of New York City, no matter how many companies have failed, are certainly running at a big profit.

But to go further in the findings of this London Committee. The Committee deals separately with the cases put forward on both sides.

**SOME OWNERS NOT ALL WANTED CHARGES RAISED.**  
"The proprietors say—That the average gross takings per cab have fallen greatly compared with those of a year ago, and are insufficient, after paying the drivers 25 per cent. commission, to defray running expenses, renew tires, provide for depreciation, and also to earn a fair dividend on the capital employed. They demand, therefore, an in-

crease of the fare from 15c to 20c for the first mile, leaving the fare for subsequent miles at the present rate of 15c. They are not, however, unanimous, for at least one company disapproves of the proposal, and some of the owners drivers are not in favor of the increased fare.

"That at present they receive a mere fraction of the extras earned by the cab, and believe that if a notice were placed on a plate affixed to each cab by the police to the effect that no extras should be paid unless recorded on the taximeter it would ensure their receiving a much larger proportion, as the disregard by the driver of such a notice would then become a police offense."

"That tampering with taximeters to the prejudice of the owners is of frequent occurrence. They are careful not to bring any general charge, but they assert that this fraud is an increasing one."

"That the topographical test for drivers demanded by the police is so severe that a shortage of drivers results, and they ask that a less severe examination shall be provided."

"They unreservedly denounce the gasoline tax and claim that it is an undue burden on the industry, and they base their claim for an increase of fares partly upon this additional burden having been imposed since the scale of charges was fixed, and also partly on the added expense attendant on the additional requirements of the police for the protection of the public, such as a second non-skid tire, the extinguisher, and the speaking tube."

**ARGUING FOR THE REMOVAL OF DUTIES AND TAXES.**

"The duties paid on the cab at the present moment amount to nearly \$5. Further there are taxes on gasoline and an income besides local rates on garages. The owners complain of the cumulative effect of these burdens on the industry, and urge that the same should be removed in the case of public service vehicles such as taxicabs."

Here it might be mentioned that London owners are taxed nearly \$30 license a cab per year, while in New York his tax is only \$10. Something of a difference.

"Generally that the whole average earnings of the trade are pulled down by the practice of a certain class of 'lax' drivers who, being under no obligation to perform a specified distance, and having no other inducement to this, complete reports plainly show that work than his immediate needs, takes out a cab and neglects to work it in a proper manner, being apparently satisfied with a small daily earning."

"The owners say that they are content with the condition of the cab but are fobbed by the owners in New York who, since they pay the drivers by the day instead of 25 per cent., as is paid in London, The Pittsburgh Taxicab Company pay their drivers 20 per cent. the drivers paying for their gasoline, and acknowledge an earning of 6 per cent. on their money invested. Yet taxicabs are not as universally used in Pittsburgh as in New York. Here in the drivers' side in the London report: **DRIVERS COMPLAIN OF UNDUCE STRAIN ON HEALTH.**

"The drivers say a demand for \$2.50 per day remuneration has been put forward on behalf of the men. "That the life of a taxicab driver is one of undue strain on the health, and they point to the fact that cab-driving is classed as one of the dangerous trades and calls for a higher rate of insurance."

"That they suffer loss of earnings through breakdowns and by loss of fares while the breakdown occurs, through losses in consequence of blinding, through false calls and through summonses arising from the use of defective lamps, which are no fault of the drivers, and that they have necessary expenses for tips at the garage and for meals taken away from home. As regards tips, the men say that these are no concern of the owners, and that they should not be taken into consideration in determining their remuneration."

"That there is no shortage of drivers. On the contrary, there are too many licensed odd men without work."

"That the owners manage extravagantly, and that the cab companies are worked by expensive officials."

"They are practically unanimous in their objection to an increase of fare, which, they say, would seriously affect the earning capacity of the cab."

"They put forth a demand for a minimum of 75 cents a day, with 10 per cent. on the first \$5 and 25 per cent. thereafter, coupled with the request that the owners shall pay for the gasoline."

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"As regards the demand that Scotland Yard shall affix to the plate the required statement as to extras, the committee think that there is no objection to this course being pursued if the owners think it will assist in collecting the extras, and assure the public as to the sums properly payable."

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"The committee considers that the effect of the evidence was to prove that an average good driver obtains a minimum average of \$8.50 a week from all sources net, after paying for gasoline. A very experienced, hard-working driver earns from \$10 up to even \$15. The evidence also proved that the days worked per week do not on the average exceed five days."

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